NEWS ANALYSIS 1-1573 OCTOBER 5, 1976
RONALD J. DUNLAVEY

MIDDLE EAST PERSPECTIVES

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY HAS THESE THOUGHTS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES FOR REGAINING PEACE MOMENTUM IN THE MIDDLE EAST:

VOICE:

THREE YEARS AGO---ON OCTOBER SIXTH, 1973---EGYPTIAN FORCES CROSSED THE SUEZ CANAL, AND THE FOURTH ARAB-ISRAELI WAR WAS UNDERWAY. LIKE ALL ARAB-ISRAELI WARS, IT DIDN'T LAST VERY LONG, BUT IT HAD SIGNIFICANT RESULTS. IT SHOOK ISRAELI MILITARY COMPLACENCY AND RESTORED A DEGREE OF ARAB CONFIDENCE. IT ENDED ONCE AND FOR ALL THE BELIEF THAT THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION COULD BE ALLOWED TO STAGNATE INDEFINITELY. IT DEMONSTRATED ONCE AGAIN THE VITAL CONNECTION BETWEEN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT AND WORLD PEACE. AND IT TRIGGERED DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT THREE UNPRECEDENTED AGREEMENTS AMONG THE MAJOR PARTICIPANTS--- EGYPT, ISRAEL AND SYRIA---AND THE CONVENING OF THE GENEVA MIDDLE EAST PEACE CONFERENCE.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE MOMENTUM OF THESE PEACE EFFORTS HAS BEEN STALLED FOR OVER A YEAR---EVER SINCE THE SINAI AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT. THE CHIEF REASON FOR THIS HAS BEEN THE CONFLICT IN LEBANON, WHICH HAS PREOCCUPIED AND DIVIDED THE ARAB WORLD. THEN, TOO, THE ATTENTION OF SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER---WHO PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS AFTER THE 1973 WAR---HAS BEEN LARGELY ENGAGED WITH THE PROBLEM OF SOUTHERN AFRICA.

NOW, HOWEVER, THERE ARE SIGNS THAT THE TIME IS FAST APPROACHING FOR A RENEWAL OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS. OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT A LEBANESE SETTLEMENT MAY NOT BE FAR OFF, AS REPORTS INCREASE OF SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS AMONG THE PARTIES CHIEFLY CONCERNED. AND

BOTH THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION---CO-CHAIRMEN OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE---HAVE CALLED FOR IT TO BE RECONVENED SOON. IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY LAST WEEK, MR. KISSINGER DECLARED: "THE STEP-BY-STEP NEGOTIATIONS OF THE PAST THREE YEARS HAVE BROUGHT US TO A POINT WHERE COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS SEEM POSSIBLE." "THE UNITED STATES," HE ADDED, "IS PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN AN EARLY RESUMPTION OF THE WORK OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE." HE STRESSED THE NEED FOR CAREFUL PREPARATION, POSSIBLY THROUGH A PREPARATORY-CONFERENCE AT WHICH THE NEGOTIATING STRUCTURES WOULD BE DISCUSSED.

IN ANY EVENT, SAID SECRETARY KISSINGER, "THE UNITED STATES WILL DO ALL THAT IT CAN TO ASSURE THAT BY THE TIME THIS ASSEMBLY MEETS NEXT YEAR IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO REPORT FURTHER SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD A JUST AND LASTING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST." HE DID NOT SAY SO, BUT THE THIRTY-SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY WILL BE MEETING ON THE NEXT ANNIVERSARY OF THE NINETEEN SEVENTY-THREE WAR---AND IT WOULD BE FITTING IF, BY THAT TIME, A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT WERE PERCEPTIBLY CLOSER.

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